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## Editorial

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## Mythcon 52: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

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## EDITORIAL

THIS IS THE TYPE OF ISSUE I PARTICULARLY ENJOY as an editor and a reader—an issue where articles lead from one to another along a pathway of related ideas, encouraging the reader to make connections and head off in new directions along the way.

We start off with a fascinating piece by Jason Marc Harris on the significance of water superstitions and the varied array of water creatures in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Scottish folklore—but before we are finished we have touched on similar folkloric elements from Norway to Benin to ancient Greece.

After this peek at the simmering ingredients in the Cauldron of Story, Annie Kinniburgh shows us what use Tolkien made of some elements of Celtic folklore by tracing similarities between Tolkien's Noldor and the Irish Tuatha Dé Danaan, demonstrating that his Elves owe at least as much to this heritage as to the Norse *álfar*.

From Celtic influences on Tolkien we move to the Norse legendarium and the Völsungs. Pierre H. Berube gives us a thorough and analytical guide to the recently published *Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún*, listing Tolkien's sources for each incident in his poem and finding analogs in the rest of his work. Berube's charts are an excellent guide through this tangle of Northern legend and Tolkien's unfamiliar and highly allusive poetic style, and will provide a firm starting place for later scholarship on this long-unseen work.

Then on to a more modern influence—and a negative influence, at that. Anita G. Gorman and Leslie Robertson Mateer shed some light on the connection between Amanda McKittrick Ros, frequently hailed as one of the worst writers to ever set pen to paper, and the Inklings, who would compete to see who could read aloud from her *oeuvre* the longest with a straight face.

The second path through this issue begins with a study of two contrasting myths of fathers and sons—the stories of Oedipus and Percival, which Claude Lévi-Strauss saw as in some ways mirror images of each other. Inbar Shaham explores Oedipal and Grail-story imagery in a number of contemporary films, focusing most closely on *Pulp Fiction* and *The Sixth Sense*.

From here we move on to another film: Jim Henson's *Labyrinth*. Shiloh Carroll demonstrates how *Labyrinth* can trace its ancestry to the dream vision genre exemplified by such medieval works as "Pearl" and *The Divine Comedy*,

showing how the dream vision parallels and guides the main character Sarah's growth towards maturity.

The next bend in the path leads to a further exploration of child and young adult characters dealing with the pull towards maturity, as Jennifer L. Miller speculates that echoes of Hans Christian Andersen's "Snow Queen" inevitably (for readers familiar with the tale) bring a tinge of sexuality to encounters with the White Witch of Narnia.

Continuing with the theme of child characters (and backtracking to films as well) we turn to David Emerson's study of the power of innocence, particularly of innocent girl characters. In his paper we study Dorothy of Oz, Lucy of Narnia, and Chihiro from Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* to discover just how their innocence works as their greatest strength.

The path to the next paper is a hidden one, as befits the topic of magic, but the name magic worked by the witch Yubaba in *Spirited Away* (controlling her workers by stealing their names from their signed contracts) leads us to the name magic associated with evil characters in Tolkien and Rowling which I discuss in my paper. And from this topic we return full-circle to the name magic mentioned in Harris's opening article . . .

This issue we feature reviews of *Tales Before Narnia: The Roots of Modern Fantasy and Science Fiction*, edited by Douglas A. Anderson; *The Magician's Book: A Skeptic's Adventures in Narnia*, by Laura Miller; *Projecting Tolkien's Musical Worlds: A Study of Musical Affect in Howard Shore's Soundtrack to Lord of the Rings*, by Matthew Young; *Esotericism, Art, and Imagination*, edited by Arthur Versluis et al.; three new books on *The Wind in the Willows*, including two annotated versions; *Truths Breathed Through Silver: The Inklings' Moral and Mythopoeic Legacy*, edited by Jonathan B. Himes with Joe R. Christopher and Salwa Khoddam; and Volume VI of *Tolkien Studies*. If you would like to be a reviewer or suggest a book to review, please contact the editor.

In addition to the referees on the *Mythlore* Editorial Advisory Board, I would also like to thank Marjorie Burns, David Bratman, and Amy H. Sturgis for their assistance with this issue.

—Janet Brennan Croft

